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Senate Republican Caucus Chair

Committees: Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance; Health and Long-Term Care;
Ways and Means; Rules

May 7, 2009

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the second in my three-part e-mail series about what happened during the 2009 legislative session. Today I wanted to share with you some of the things that happened this legislative session that have a **particular effect on those of us in the 12th District**.

Overall, I was very pleased at the amount of progress we were able to make for the people of North Central Washington. Working across party lines in the Senate and with the House was key to getting many of these bills passed. Some did not pass, and may be considered again next year. Overall, it was a very good session for our district.

Bills that made it to the governor

Three of my prime-sponsored bills, all introduced at the request of people in our district, passed the Legislature this year. Two have already been signed by the governor and become law.

- **Maintaining our selective fisheries.** 2006 figures show that recreational fishing contributes \$1.1 billion a year to Washington's economy. A big part of keeping that going is maintaining our selective fisheries, but budget cuts at the Department of Fish and Wildlife have threatened to close some of them. Some of our local fishing groups came to me this year with an idea for a way to continue funding selective fisheries despite these budget cuts. [Senate Bill 5421](#) will create the Columbia River Recreational Salmon and Steelhead Pilot Stamp Program. Under the bill, anglers over age 15 wishing to fish will purchase a \$7.50 stamp, and stamp revenues will go into a dedicated account used to maintain selective fisheries on the Columbia River (below Chief Joseph Dam to 10 miles above the mouth of the Columbia River) and its tributaries. SB 5421 has been delivered to the governor for her consideration; she is scheduled to take action on it tomorrow.
- **Intermediate drivers' license.** Under [Substitute Senate Bill 5469](#), a young driver with an intermediate drivers' license will not be put on probation if he or she is involved in an accident, a ticket was issued and the accident was not the fault of the young driver. Gov. Christine Gregoire signed this bill April 17. It will go into effect July 26.

- **Protecting consumers.** [Substitute Senate Bill 5388](#) will require auto dealers to disclose damage when selling a car, including to another dealer. The governor signed this bill April 10; it goes into effect July 26.

I also sponsored a property tax-related measure this year that passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the governor on April 30. [Senate Bill 5368](#) requires counties to perform annual property tax revaluations starting in 2014. This will help property owners avoid big property tax spikes and keep them from paying higher property taxes for years on property that has declined in value. SB 5368 also includes language requiring the state Department of Revenue to work with one county that has the technology ready to help it convert to annual revaluations by the end of this year. That county is Chelan County. I will continue to work on property tax issues and will update you in more detail later in the year.

Keeping our state parks open

One area that was originally slated for deep cuts in the operating budget was state parks. Parks on the closure/mothball list at one point included Wenatchee Confluence, Lake Wenatchee State Park, Alta Lake Park near Pateros and Sun Lakes-Dry Falls State Park near Coulee City. Many of you contacted me about this issue and expressed your support for keeping our state parks and recreational areas open.

In the end the Legislature passed [Substitute House Bill 2339](#), a measure that changes the \$5 parks donation on vehicle registrations from an “opt in” system to an “opt out.” Under the new law, rather than choose *to* donate, citizens would choose *not* to donate to parks when purchasing their vehicle license tabs. The measure is expected to raise enough revenues to keep all state parks open.

What happened with hydropower?

Under Initiative 937, passed by voters in 2006, energy companies are required to get a certain portion of their power from renewable resources. Hydroelectric power, which meets about 80 percent of our state’s power needs, is not recognized as a renewable resource under the initiative. That means energy companies must purchase renewable power elsewhere, making it more expensive for you to heat your homes and for employers to do business in Washington.

There were many bills on the table this year, including several I sponsored, to recognize hydropower as a clean, renewable source of energy. [Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5840](#), which passed the Senate, was changed before its passage to increase the required portion of renewable power while only slightly expanding the list of renewable energy sources. Several amendments were offered to the bill on the Senate floor that would have reduced energy costs for consumers by expanding the amount of hydropower that is considered renewable and allowed additional conservation to count against the renewable energy requirement. Those amendments were not adopted. The House passed an amended version of the bill that would have recognized all hydropower as renewable, but the Senate failed to agree to the change, and the bill ultimately died.

Washington produces an abundance of hydroelectricity, something that helps keep our utility rates low. I will continue to pursue recognizing hydropower as renewable, clean power.

Transportation-related measures

- **Changing WSDOT regions.** The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is organized into six regions that are generally separated along county boundaries. Under [Senate Bill 5682](#), our district's WSDOT region would have been vastly expanded to run from Canada to the Oregon border, and we likely would have lost our WSDOT office in Wenatchee. I worked very hard this session to ensure the bill did not pass, and it died in the House.
- **Public transportation on Lake Chelan.** Over the past year there has been discussion about the future of public transportation on Lake Chelan. Last summer I hosted a meeting of those involved with this issue to talk about where to go next. This year I co-sponsored [Substitute Senate Bill 5894](#), a measure that includes authorization for the state Utilities and Transportation Commission to study the issue of public transportation on Lake Chelan. The bill passed the Legislature and has been delivered to the governor for her consideration to sign into law.
- **Requiring permits for studded tires.** [Senate Bill 5859](#) would have required a \$100 state-issued permit for the use of studded tires even in the winter. The bill died in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Deadlines claim some bills

Some of the bills I sponsored did not make it through the legislative process this year. Many of these ideas will be examined over the interim to see if they should be pursued again next year.

- **Aiding school districts with their levies.** [Senate Bill 5887](#) (along with [Senate Joint Resolution 8213](#)) would have amended the state Constitution to allow school districts to change their timing on school levies so they can more easily plan their budgets.
- **Ensuring training for home inspectors.** [Senate Bill 5644](#) would have allowed home inspectors to take their training either in a classroom or online. Right now state law requires that they be trained in a classroom. This presents a hardship for some of the people in the 12th District because the only class offered is several hours away.
- **Expanding the recreational use statute.** Under the Lake Chelan Dam relicensing process the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) gave permission to kayakers to kayak in the Chelan Gorge. The Chelan County Public Utility District, however, faces potential liability associated with having people take such risks on their property. [Senate Bill 5422](#) would have given the PUD the same types of protections offered to landowners who allow rock climbing on their property while meeting the FERC requirement.
- **Affordable health care coverage for young adults.** [Senate Bill 5052](#), which I introduced this year, would have given young adults aged 19 to 34, the state's largest population of uninsured, more options for affordable tailored coverage. This year the Legislature issued a report showing my proposal would have covered nearly 60,000 more young adults and was the only one of several health care options studied that would increase insurance coverage at no cost to the state. I have pursued this idea for many years and will continue to move ahead with it. Young people in our district and our state deserve the same choices and options as young people in other parts of the country.

Natural resource issues

- **Livestock watering issue remains unsolved.** Since 1945 ranchers have been able to water their livestock, control dust and cool their animals from an exempt well with no daily gallon limit. Last November the state Department of Ecology issued a letter greatly restricting how water can be used for livestock. As a result, what ranchers always understood to be a rightful use of their water became threatened. Two bills were introduced in the House of Representatives this session related to this issue. [House Bill 1509](#) would have put into statute a definition of stock watering to include all reasonable uses normally associated with the care and management of livestock with no daily limit. [House Bill 1091](#) would have put a 5,000-gallon daily limit on water for livestock purposes. Both bills died in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. It appears this issue is headed for a study group over the interim with the hope of a resolution for the 2010 Legislature to consider.
- **Bill will help keep fish hatcheries operating.** [Second Substitute House Bill 1951](#) authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife to enter into partnerships with nonprofit organizations, for-profit entities and tribes to operate state-owned fish hatcheries. Seven hatcheries had faced closure in the 2009-11 operating budget. The bill passed the Legislature and the governor signed it Tuesday.

Recognizing local leaders

Perhaps the best moments of the session came when I was able to tell my Senate colleagues about some of our local leaders. I sponsored a [resolution](#) honoring former Leavenworth mayor and long-time community leader Jim Ward and on March 27 was able to [rise before the Senate](#) and visitors from home to honor Jim's leadership.

On April 8 I had the pleasure of hosting the [Apple Blossom festival and its royalty](#), and sponsoring a Senate [resolution](#) in their honor.

Point of clarification...

In yesterday's e-mail I mentioned that the final transportation budget retained funding for work at the junction of U.S. Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 97 to Ninth Street (S.R. 28). Although this is the formal name of the project, many folks refer to it as "Eastmont Extension." Just a point of clarification in case you were wondering which project this referred to.

In closing...

As we focus on how the session affected us here in the 12th District I wanted to remind you that my district office has reopened now that session is over. The address is 625 Okanogan Avenue, Suite 301, Wenatchee, WA 98801; it is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday by appointment. If you want to schedule a meeting with me, please contact my assistant Shiloh Burgess at (509) 663-9702 or burgess.shiloh@leg.wa.gov.

Watch for one more e-mail message from me on the big issues of the session! I'll be sending that out to you at the beginning of next week.

Best regards,

Linda

LINDA EVANS PARLETTE

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